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TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM NI

SUBJECT: SPOT REPORT ON CONTINUING VIOLENCE IN PLATEAU STATE

REF: ABUJA 2766

Classified By: Political Counselor Russell J. Hanks for Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Post reported in reftel the impeachment crisis in Plateau State and resulting violence when the police fired on a crowd of protesters. The situation became more intense over the long holiday weekend. (Note: The GON was closed for business October 23-24 for the end of Ramadan. End Note). Embassy contacts and the media are reporting a palpable tension, and the town of Pankshin has imposed a dusk to dawn curfew after two people were feared killed in apparently unrelated violence.

¶2. (C) The impeachment process against Governor Dariye continues within the truncated state House of Assembly. The six remaining members (of 24) asked the state's Chief Judge to set up a panel investigating charges of corruption against the governor. Dariye responded in the press by saying he would not appear before the "kangaroo panel." The group of 14 pro-Dariye legislators who were removed from the state assembly for leaving the PDP filed an injunction in Jos High Court asking for an injunction against the 6 anti-Dariye members from exercising their power as a legislature. (NOTE: Other states' representatives have changed parties and have not been removed from office. END NOTE.) If granted and honored, the injunction would effectively stop the impeachment. It is unclear how the courts would resolve dueling orders with one court approving the investigative panel and another blocking it.

¶3. (C) COMMENT. PolOff and PolFSN plan to visit Plateau State October 29-31 to assess the situation. Specifically, we will try to meet with Governor Dariye to get his perspective. One Christian religious leader who is close to the governor said that for the moment violence is restrained because the people of Plateau State do not want a state of emergency to be declared as it was in Ekiti State (and in Plateau previously). However, he predicted riots if Dariye is eventually removed from office. If riots happen and a state of emergency is declared, it would be a troubling sign for those concerned about the government's plans for next spring's elections. Post will report more after the trip to Plateau State. END COMMENT.

CAMPBELL